

Barnstorming pilots in search of adventure

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HAYWARD — A dozen pilots, most of them doubling up in flimsy looking, open, two-seat wood-and-fabric Piper Cub aircraft, have left the East Bay for a 16-day flying adventure through the great Northwest.

Unlike most travelers, however, they have no particular destinations.

"There's an old saying among aviators and that's, 'Where you are is where you want to be,'" said Randy Parent, a helicopter pilot with the East Bay Regional Park District. The Oakland man flies a 1945 Piper Cub.

"It might take us all day to get to Truckee, but that's an accomplishment. That's our experience."

For the second year, the pilots — along with a ground support crew in a motor home — are experi-

encing the thrill of 1940s barnstorming while contending with modern air space.

Five of the six planes taking off from the Hayward Air Terminal Friday were vintage, propeller-driven Piper Cubs, built between 1939 and 1946.

Flimsy in appearance and lacking starters, electrical systems, radios and generators, they cruise at an average of 70 mph. The only "modern" aircraft accompanying them is a 1955 metal Cessna.

"Last year (when they went 3,000 air miles into Montana and Idaho), we had a great time, but it was a learning experience," said Parent, who is traveling with his wife, Traci, and son, Eric.

The group has hand-held radios and compasses to help them chart their course. In the motor home are tents and sleeping bags for those occasions when they will land in a



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With Chuck Wells laughing inside the cockpit, Randy Parent gives the propeller of Wells' 1946 Piper Cub a good yank to start the craft.

remote field and have to spend the night outdoors.

"In the 1940s, barnstorming was a novelty and no one got mad if you stopped on their land," Parent said. "Now, if you're on someone's field and they don't want you to be, they

might have a shotgun or call the police."

On this trip, the pilots hope to cover portions of Nebraska, Montana, South Dakota and Washington in what could be a 3,400-mile journey.